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FLORIDA HEALTH IN CHARLOTTE COUNTY RECOGNIZES CERVICAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



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PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County (DOH-Charlotte) recognizes January as Cervical Health Awareness Month, a time to educate, encourage and empower women to visit their health care provider for information and screening for cervical cancer.

“Cervical cancer can be prevented. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine is a cancer prevention vaccine,” states Dr. Frank Lepore, Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County. “Combined with screenings, the HPV vaccine can greatly reduce cancer rates in Charlotte County.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), approximately 12,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. In Florida, there were 914 new cases and 345 deaths from cervical cancer in 2013 (Florida Cancer Data System). Most cervical cancer cases occur in women who have never been screened with a Pap test or have not been screened in the past five years.

Since the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine was introduced in 2006, CDC reports there has been a 64 percent reduction in vaccine-type HPV infections among teen girls in the United States. Studies have shown that fewer teens are getting genital warts and cervical pre-cancers (*such as abnormal pap tests*) are decreasing. Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. HPV is a common skin virus that is passed from one person to another during sexual activity. The HPV vaccination series can help prevent multiple cancers, including cervical cancer and cancer of the head, mouth, neck and throat.

The Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices recommends vaccinating boys and girls ages 11 to 12 years old. The HPV vaccine may be given starting at 9 years of age and through the age of 26. *HPV vaccine is available at DOH-Charlotte by appointment.*

Talk to your medical provider about when a Pap test is most appropriate for you. Tests for specific HPV strains can support earlier diagnosis of cervical cancer. When found early, it is highly treatable.

According to CDC, follow these tips to reduce your risk or prevent cervical cancer:

- Get the HPV vaccine;
- See your doctor regularly for a Pap test if you are a woman between the ages of 21 and 65;
- Do not smoke; and

- Limit your number of sexual partners.

To schedule an appointment to receive the HPV vaccine, please contact DOH-Charlotte at 941-624-7200.

About the Florida Department of Health

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